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SIPDIS

NSC FOR JFRASER
CAIRO FOR JMAXSTADT

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ZAK-ZAKY EMERGES FROM HIBERNATION

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reasons:
1.5 (B & D).

1. (C) Ibrahim el-Zak-Zaky, leader of a fringe Nigerian Islamic sect calling for the return to traditional Shi'a principles, emerged over the weekend from a period of inactivity. Sheikh Zak-Zaky held a fundraising event and public rally in Kano on May 10-11, attracting some media attention and drawing sizeable crowds of onlookers.

2. (C) Ostensibly, the reason for his event was to raise money for Islamic schools to provide "functional education with sound Islamic background." According to the BBC, over 50 million Naira was collected during the weekend events.

3. (C) Emboff observed an estimated 100 vehicles traveling in a motorcade in Kano shouting Zak-Zaky's slogans. Calling for an "end to democracy and beginning of Islamic governance," the vehicles paraded in this northern commercial center for more than two hours.

4. (C) COMMENT: Rendered irrelevant shortly after the fall of the Abacha regime, Zak-Zaky has been largely ignored due to his doctrinaire opposition to the implementation of political shari'a. (NOTE: He claimed shari'a was impossible without an Islamic regime in place. END NOTE.) He has always concentrated on the social benefits of his brand of Shi'ism, so collecting money for Islamic education is no departure. (NOTE: His children are said to attend western-style private schools in Nigeria. END NOTE.) His appearance at this time is probably not a coincidence. Given the high level of dissatisfaction with the recent elections, Zak-Zaky could attempt to capitalize opportunistically on the disenchantment of a susceptible segment of northern Nigeria's large population. Providing an alternative to the democracy that has alienated them, Zak-Zaky's brand of traditional Shi'ism could appeal to some in Nigeria's northern region who view critically the GON's failure to provide infrastructure and social services.
JETER